

COUP PREVENTION: A CRITICAL INGREDIENT OF NATION-BUILDING OPERATIONS

BY

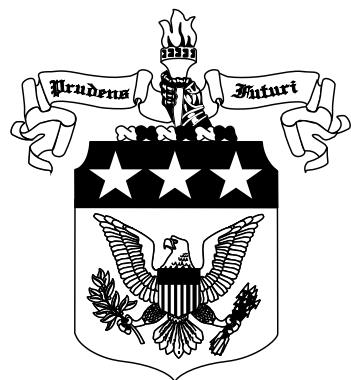
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

COUP PREVENTION: A CRITICAL INGREDIENT OF NATION-BUILDING OPERATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

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One potential component of nation-building operations, which is currently funded for Fiscal Year 2010 under Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act, is a requirement to generate, train, and equip that nation's armed forces. In doing so, there is a risk of creating an armed force that may seek to take control of the country by means of a coup following the departure of the nation-building architects. The purpose of this research paper is two-fold. First, using historical examples and coup literature, we extract key indicators that signal the potential for a coup to occur. Secondly, we prescribe approaches that governments should apply in future nation-building scenarios in order to mitigate the risk of a coup following the departure of the nation-building architects and participating countries. A significant contribution that this research paper makes, in addition to a coup prevention methodology, is to illuminate the coordination and participation required by the Department of Defense and the Interagency (i.e. whole-of-government) when the U.S. is engaged in nation-building operations. These coup prevention approaches may be further included within national reconciliation strategies.

COUP PREVENTION: A CRITICAL INGREDIENT OF NATION-BUILDING OPERATIONS

It can be taken as agreed that the aim of policy is to unify and reconcile all aspects of internal administration as well as of spiritual values.

—Carl von Clausewitz¹

On July 14, 1958, a swift, predawn coup, executed by officers of the Nineteenth Brigade under the leadership of Brigadier Abd al Karim Qasim and Colonel Abd as Salaam Arif, toppled the Iraqi monarchy.² This was neither the first, nor the last military coup or attempted coup to occur in Iraq during the 20th Century. The 1958 coup, which destroyed the power of the sheikhs and absentee land proprietors, was the culmination of a number of attempted coups beginning with the 1936 Bakr Sidqi coup.³ Following the coup, power shifted to the middle class and peasants. The primary reason the coup occurred was that the policies of the Iraqi government were no longer representative of the values and morals of the people. “They [the Iraqi leadership] had relied on their economic power, on their networks of patronage, and on the deference still shown to them to secure their privileges.”⁴ In essence, the interpretation of Clausewitz’s “remarkable trinity”⁵ represented by the people, the military, and the government, was out of balance. The purpose of this research paper is two-fold. First, using historical examples and coup literature, we will extract key indicators that signal the potential for a coup to occur. Secondly, we will prescribe approaches that governments should apply in future nation-building scenarios in order to mitigate the risk of a coup following the departure of the nation-building architects and participating countries.

A significant contribution that this research paper makes, in addition to a coup prevention methodology, is to illuminate the coordination and participation required by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Interagency (i.e. whole-of-government) when

the U.S. is engaged in nation-building operations. These coup prevention approaches may be further included within national reconciliation strategies. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. We will begin with an overview of nation-building operations to include the primary components that countries involved in nation-building operations must consider. Within the component of security, we will focus on the potential requirement to generate and train security forces. We will then review four successful coups from which we extract, from the coups and existing literature, a list of characteristics and indicators that illustrate the conditions that may lead to a coup attempt. The paper will conclude with prescribed approaches to prevent future coups when the United States concludes nation-building operations. In addition, we provide points of consideration for USAFRICOM and other Geographic Combatant Commands.

Nation-Building Operations

If the first decade of the 21st Century foreshadows and underscores the strategic environment for the decades to come, the number of nation-building opportunities will continue to rise as nation states either fail, or are failing and ask for assistance (permissive environments) from the United States and/or the United Nations. Following the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, the United States and coalition partners have been involved in two nation-building operations, Afghanistan and Iraq. While neither of these operations started out with nation-building as a way to achieve the ends of eradicating Al Qaeda, nation-building has become an essential strategy in both theaters in order to achieve our desired level of stability.

In the aforementioned nation-building examples, the United States served as the lead nation with assistance from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-partners and other nations comprising a coalition of the willing. However, it is just as likely in

future nation-building scenarios that the United Nations (UN) or NATO may have the mission. Figure 1 highlights the roles and mission of the United Nations from the perspective of the Danish Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Carsten Staur. Nation-building operations for the United Nations fall under the Peace Building mission within Figure 1.⁶ The UN has succeeded in nation-building operations within the permissive environments such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia, Namibia, El Salvador, and Mozambique, to name a few.⁷ A greater challenge lies in those environments that are less permissive (i.e. failed states).

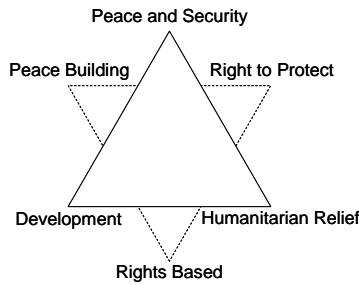


Figure 1. United Nations Roles and Missions⁸

Paul Collier of Oxford University, along with coauthor Anke Hoeffler, “has found international military interventions to be the most cost-effective means of promoting sustained peace and economic growth in societies emerging from conflict.”⁹ However, when interventions are required, often times the primary result is achieved quickly but the nation-building participants are left with the more time-consuming task of “refashioning the society in which they intervened.”¹⁰ The RAND Corporation identifies several components of nation-building operations derived from UN, the United States, and European involvement in such operations spanning the past sixty years. The two most successful instances of nation-building for the U.S. occurred in post-World War II Germany and Japan. According to the RAND Corporation, the key components of

nation building are *security, humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilization, democratization, and development* to which the ultimate objective is “to leave behind a society likely to remain at peace with itself and its neighbors once external security forces are removed and full sovereignty is restored.”¹¹

Embedded within the *security* and *development* components above is the potential requirement to generate, train, and equip that nation’s armed forces. This mission becomes essential if the occupied country is contained within, or adjacent to, an unstable region in which future threats exist. For example, since April 2004, the United States and coalition partners, via Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I), have adopted a substantial mission in generating, training, and equipping the Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF). Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) temporarily gives the Department of Defense the authority to spend specified funds to build the capacity of foreign military forces worldwide.¹² More recently, in his address to the United States Corp of Cadets at West Point on December 1, 2009, President Obama presented his administration’s strategy for Afghanistan, which included an exit plan that relies on equipping and training Afghan National Forces. There is a risk, however, when creating a nation’s armed forces in that it may seek to take control of the country by means of a coup once the nation-building architects leave the country believing that stability has been achieved under a governance system that the architects established. A coup can also occur prior to the departure of nation-building teams as in the November 1963 Coup in South Vietnam, which occurred while the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Groups (MAAG) were still in country. Even though the South Vietnamese military had attempted a coup earlier in 1960, the U.S.

continued to generate and train the South Vietnamese armed forces and, subsequently provided monetary assistance, via the CIA, to the military leaders involved in the successful coup in 1963 that removed President Ngo Dinh Diem.¹³

Also embedded within the *security* component of nation-building is the potential requirement to establish a rule of law. “Training judges and other legal personnel, building infrastructure, and assisting with institutional reform are necessary aspects of rebuilding rule-of-law systems. But these alone are not sufficient.”¹⁴ Establishing an effective rule of law will be addressed later in our coup prevention approaches.

Historical Coups

By definition, a coup d'etat (or coup) involves the sudden, often violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group that often results in military rule. A coup is different from a revolution in that a revolution is undertaken by a large number of people working for basic social, economic, and political change.¹⁵ From 1956 to 2001, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has experienced 80 successful coups along with 108 failed coup attempts by elements of the military and related security services.¹⁶ While Africa has been a hotbed for coups over the past six decades, the four coups that we will review cover three continents.

The first coup that we review took place in Nigeria in December 1983. This was not the first coup to take place in Nigeria. In fact, from 1966 until the 1983 coup, Nigeria experienced four coups (two succeeded, two failed). The 1983 coup was significant because it returned Nigeria to military rule for the next 15 years. Prior to the coup, Nigeria was governed by the Shagari administration beginning in October 1979 and was welcomed by most Nigerians, despite inter-party accusation over the presidential elections. It did not take long, however, for the public to become disenchanted with the

civilian leadership. Perceived corruption within the governing bodies along with the decline of economic, social, and political conditions led to intra- and inter-party confrontations, which resulted in the formation of first, a National Party of Nigeria, and the Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP) alliance. This was later followed by the formation of a Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)/NPP alliance. When combined, it culminated in large-scale bitterness, violence and vandalism that characterized the national elections of 1983. "Other social ills that were evident at the time included political corruption, unemployment, high cost of living, rising incidence of armed robbery, and violent ethnic and religious riots and disturbances."¹⁷ The military takeover had considerable support from the public. More importantly, "the regime set about recovering ill-gotten wealth from politicians and other public officers through special military tribunals that it set up. It also sought to cleanse the nation's ... stables of corruption and immorality."¹⁸

Our second coup is the Pakistan coup in October 1999, which was the fourth coup in the country's history. The Pakistani people shared an optimistic view of the military takeover by General Pervez Musharraf because it was based "on the drifting nature of Mian Nawaz Sharif's administration that lacked political stability, contrasted with unlimited desire to amass power and wealth."¹⁹ Additionally, the military leadership was outraged by "the criminalization of a knowingly inefficient administration, a deteriorating law and order situation, and the humiliating retreat from Kargil."²⁰ A unique aspect of the Pakistan coup of 1999 is the degree to which it was supported by the Pakistani judicial system months after the successful coup. On May 12, 2000, the verdict issued by the Supreme Court validated the coup and imprisoned Mian Nawaz Sharif for 25 years and, in essence, provided a formidable amount of judicial legitimacy.

Furthermore, the verdict empowered the generals to amend the Constitution.²¹ Another key aspect of the coup worth highlighting is the revelation that the people viewed the Pakistani Army as the “powerful element of credibility and receptivity”²² instead of the government, which was elected to represent the needs of the people.

The third coup is the 1960 Turkish Coup, which was staged by a group of Turkish army officers against the democratically elected government of the Democrat Party (DP) on May 27, 1960.²³ The Turkish Army, which rapidly expanded during World War II, was extensively modernized with the aid of U.S. advisers following the war. Many officers feared that the DP, which was elected by the people, threatened the principles of the secular progressive Kemalist state (the ideology promoted by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his associates after the creation of the Republic of Turkey). The Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi; CHP), which governed Turkey from 1923 until 1950, also accused the DP of reversing the policies of secularism. Meanwhile, the economic conditions within Turkey began to deteriorate rapidly between 1958 and 1960. In response to the economic conditions, the DP leadership imposed several restrictive measures that increased unemployment rates and raised inflation. The CHP continued to attack the political and economic actions of the DP and, in response, the DP attempted to dissolve the CHP, which was met by student demonstrations. In April 1960, the DP declared martial law.

“Some younger officers saw the army as the direct instrument of unity and reform. On May 3, 1960, the commander of the land forces, General Cemal Gürsel, demanded political reforms and resigned when his demands were refused.”²⁴ On May 27, officers and cadets from the Istanbul and Ankara war colleges carried out an almost

bloodless coup. The leaders of the coup d'etat established a 38-member National Unity Committee and appointed General Cemal Gürsel, who had not taken any role in the coup, head of state, prime minister, and the minister of defense upon completion of the military take-over.²⁵

President Celal Bayar, prime minister Adnan Menderes and some members of the cabinet were arrested and put on trial before a kangaroo court appointed by the junta [a group of military officers who rule a country after seizing control] on the island Yassıada in the Sea of Marmara. The politicians were charged with high treason, misuse of public funds and abrogation of the constitution.²⁶

The civilian and military tribunals concluded with the execution of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Minister of Finance Hasan Polatkan.²⁷ “The military junta returned the power to civilians 17 months later in October 1961, after General Gürsel resisted the continuation of military rule.”²⁸

Our fourth and final coup is the 2009 Honduras Coup. On June 28, 2009, approximately 100 soldiers entered the residence of President Manuel Zelaya and placed him on a flight to Costa Rica, thus exiling him from Honduras.²⁹ This coup occurred on the day of a referendum that would have changed the constitution by removing the single-term limit on Honduran presidents. “Zelaya had been trying to hold the referendum despite the declaration of Honduras’ Congress and Supreme Court that the referendum was illegal.”³⁰ The military refused to provide support for the referendum, even though this was the military’s traditional role in supporting national elections, and instead seized and exiled President Zelaya by orders of the Honduran Supreme Court. President Zelaya was replaced by Roberto Micheletti, the President of the Honduran Congress.³¹

While democratic nations around the world universally condemned the coup, the actions of President Zelaya were inconsistent with the desires of his party and the people. In 2006, Zelaya ran on an election platform that supported the Central American Free Trade Agreement and future collaboration with the United States and business organizations within Honduras. “Halfway into his term he would become a political cross-dresser. Suddenly, in 2007, he declared himself a socialist and began to establish close ties with Venezuela.”³² Regarding the referendum, the Honduran Congress, by law, is the only governing body with the power to recommend changes to the constitution. “Honduras’s Congress, Zelaya’s own Liberal Party and a majority of Hondurans (in various polls) expressed their horror at the prospect of having Zelaya perpetuate himself and bring Honduras into the Chávez fold.”³³ To make matters worse, Zelaya continued to defy court orders and broke into military installations and distributed ballots in support of the referendum. Based on Zelaya’s actions and refusal to adhere to the constitutional amendments regarding term-limits, the Honduran Congress saw no other alternative and forcibly removed him from power.³⁴

This concludes our condensed review of successful coup attempts. While each of the aforementioned coup d’etats occurred at different times and on different continents, there are common characteristics that we can extract and subsequently use to assess the potential for future coups in a country of interest. However, we do not imply that if these characteristics are present, a coup is imminent. We will merely use the characteristics and additional indicators from the literature to identify risk and provide methods to mitigate these risks.

Common Coup Characteristics

“When governments fail to address the needs of the population, they become irrelevant and the people will make choices that are shaped by their own immediate needs for survival.”³⁵ A common thread found throughout each of the coups above is the perception that the government is corrupt and not serving in the best interest of the people. Therefore, our first coup characteristic is that of ***perceived government corruption.*** The key part here is the perception from the people’s and/or military’s point of view that the government is corrupt, and in turn, unbalances Clausewitz’s trinity. This perception can be manifested in many ways and is often incited by a handful of individuals who seek changes at the grassroots. In our examples the people either work through other elected officials to engage the military in order to take the necessary actions, or the military, acting as representatives for the people chose to act alone.

A second common characteristic from our case studies is that of ***economic decline and/or imbalance*** within the nation-state. In a democratic society, or societies in which the national leadership pledges to represent and support the needs of the people, it falls upon the leadership to take the appropriate measures to sustain and/or improve the economic conditions of the nation as a whole. A solid economy will contribute to the government’s ability to provide people with their physiological and safety needs under Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, which are required for basic survival.³⁶ Unfortunately, situations may arise when economic hardships fall on the nation’s citizens while the leadership and key personnel within the government display impotency in their ability to handle the economic crisis, or worse, create a noticeable economic imbalance between the people and the government. “Instability of export earnings is conducive to coups because it generates problems for both the economy

and society that can be directly blamed on the government.”³⁷ As witnessed in the Nigerian and Turkish coups, an economic decline, highlighted by increasing unemployment and inflation, caused great concern amongst the people and the military, and thus cultivated into a strong desire to remove the leadership.

A third common characteristic is one of ***diverging ideologies*** in which the personal aspirations and desires of the leadership are no longer in concert with those of the people. In Pakistan, the military was thoroughly displeased with the actions of Mian Nawaz Sharif regarding Pakistan’s retreat from the Kargil district in Kashmir, amidst rumors of developing closer relations with India. The people and the military also viewed this retreat as an appeasement of the Sharif government to the demands of the United States and the Western World, which was in direct opposition to their ideology. In a similar situation, in Honduras, the standing constitution at the time of the June 2009 coup clearly prohibited any president from serving consecutive terms. Furthermore, President Zelaya’s new relationship with Venezuela’s President Hugo Chavez Frias along with his socialist declaration, contradicted the democratic views of the people and the military, which served as an extension of the people through the congress. In Turkey, the actions of the governing party violated the principles of the secular progressive Kemalist state, which countered the people’s beliefs.

In each of the aforementioned coups, the conditions existed in which the military, commanded for the most part by competent leaders, more closely reflected the values of the people and, therefore, was seen as a legitimate ruling entity or as an appropriate mechanism for removing the government leadership that no longer met the needs of the people. Therefore, the fourth and final common characteristic from our case studies is

one of **military virtuousness (reverence)** in which the people view the military as a more virtuous and representative organization than the existing government. What this characteristic along with the first characteristic of **perceived government corruption** amplifies is an imbalance within the Clausewitzian Trinity. As long as the people act through the military, or the military acts on its own accord, then it is a coup. If the people act as a whole, it becomes a revolution and the recommendations that follow for coup prevention must be expanded to mitigate the risk of an all-out revolution.

Assigning risk measures to the four coup characteristics is a subjective assessment.

Table 1 provides a few conditions (not all inclusive) to serve as a guide when making a risk assessment based on the coup characteristics.

Characteristic	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Perceived Government Corruption	Government viewed as representing the people	Some political parties or ethnic groups not well represented	Indicators that government focus is solely on the government officials
Economic Decline and/or Imbalance	Steady state economy showing growth or potential growth	Stagnant economy	Stressed economy showing signs of collapse
Diverging Ideologies	Governing officials share the same views as the people	Small to medium sized anti-government rallies	Medium to large anti-government rallies
Military Virtuousness	People trust in the government and the military	People have more faith in military than in governing officials	Military is sole provider of the basic needs for the people

Table 1. Coup Characteristics and Subjective Risk Measures

Coup Indicators from literature

In addition to those common characteristics identified above, there are coup indicators from the literature that can be used to highlight coup potential. The literature primarily focuses on Africa known for a vast number of coup attempts. When studying Independent Black Africa in the 1960s, Professor Alan Wells from Tulane University initially focused on three common explanations: *colonial background* – e.g. the political systems inherited by African countries from colonizing nations; *contagion theory* – influence from coups within neighboring countries; *temporal theory* – belief that newly

independent countries are susceptible to a coup. However, his initial explanations all had insufficient evidence in support of his hypothesis. Professor Wells then transitioned to a multivariable approach to determine if social and economic variables can discriminate between countries that have had successful coups and attempted coups compared to those that have not.³⁸ The common characteristics we previously presented fall primarily under a social conditions label. Professor Wells' coup indicators below can be used to provide a greater degree of fidelity by using qualitative metrics (and in some instances quantitative metrics) when viewing the social and economic conditions for a specific nation. Furthermore, given that the odds for future failing and failed states in Africa remains high, these indicators could be useful for USAFRICOM in their assessments regarding coup potential within their Area of Responsibility.

The first set of indicators are categorized as socioeconomic indicators and include a) population size; b) population growth; c) urbanization; d) centrality; e) literacy; f) mass-media availability; g) economic level; and h) economic growth. What follows is a brief explanation of each variable, which we extracted from Professor Well's article.

The first indicator of *population size* is self-explanatory. However, we must highlight that larger populations are likely to have greater ethnic diversity, which often amplify tensions between the people and the leadership. *Population growth* is also self-explanatory. High growth rates, which often lead to a “youth-bulge” can place pressure on limited resources, and in turn can lead to economic imbalances and/or overall decline. *Urbanization* measures the percent of the population residing within the cities. High urbanization percentages in poor countries may indicate a wealth imbalance, whereas high urbanization in wealthy countries may just be a sign of further

modernization. *Centrality* is defined as the economic and transportation concentration. Countries with one political and economic center are much easier to seize. *Literacy* is measured by the percentage of the population that claims to be literate. Wells claims that populations with low literacy rates are ripe for military intervention. *Mass-media availability* is a key indicator given that one of the first actions taken by those conducting the coup is to seize broadcasting facilities. The last two indicators, *economic level* and *economic growth*, identify a country's well-being and the effectiveness of the government, respectively. Both are quantitative measures and are strong signals for coup potential if the economic level is fragile with anticipated or occurring negative growth.³⁹

"Since the military must take action to bring about a coup ..., it is often argued that certain structural factors of the military may be conducive to coups."⁴⁰ Therefore, the second set of indicators are categorized as military indicators and include a) military participation ratio; b) military size; c) size of the police force; d) defense budget; and e) defense expenditures and the economy. The *military participation ratio* measures the percentage of military-aged men on active service and Wells claims that it is directly proportional to the balance of power within the country between the military and civilians. The *military size* and *size of military police force* indicators are also self-explanatory. The coup samples used by Professor Wells did not show significant evidence that these coup indicators were sufficient. However, it is plausible that they could play a significant role within some countries and, therefore, we will not exclude them from our list of indicators. Because they are correlated, we combine Professor

Wells' final two military indicators under the label of *defense spending*, which is measured by the percentage of the Gross National Product spent on defense.⁴¹

Two additional indicators that Wells did not introduce, but are of considerable importance, coincide with the degree of ethnic and/or religious diversity of a nation. Therefore, we introduce the indicators labeled *ethnic composition-military* and *ethnic composition-political*, which are measured by how well the composition of the military and the political leadership resemble the composition of the overall society. The indicators and risk measures are summarized in Table 2. Coup analysis, covering twenty Latin American republics from 1907 through 1966, asserted several background variables, relative to societal and political phenomena, that are strikingly similar to the indicators mentioned above.⁴²

Indicator	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
Population Size	Small	Medium	Large
Population Growth	Small or declining	Medium	Large (ex: Youth Bulge)
Urbanization	Equal distribution of populace	Noticeable increase in urbanization (transitory)	Unequal distribution of populace in the cities
Centrality	Equal distribution of economic and transportation infrastructure	Economic and transportation infrastructure concentrated in a few locations	Economic and transportation infrastructure highly centralized
Literacy	High literacy rate	Moderate literacy rate	Small literacy rate
Mass-media Availability	Non-existent or independent	Decentralized, but controlled	Centralized and controlled
Economic Level	Strong	Fragile	Poor
Economic Growth	Positive	Stagnant	Negative
Military Participation Ratio	Small Ratio	Medium Ratio	Large Ratio (militant state)
Military Size	Small	Medium	Large
Size of Police Force	Small	Medium	Large
Defense Spending	Small proportion of GNP	Medium proportion of the GNP	Large proportion of the GNP
Ethnic Composition - Military	Perfect representation	Close representation	Unbalanced representation
Ethnic Composition - Political	Perfect representation	Close representation	Unbalanced representation

Table 2. Coup Indicators and Risk Measures

Iraq Today: A Case Study

Using the coup characteristics and coup indicators provided in the previous section, what follows is an illustrative assessment of Iraq's coup potential at the end of 2009. Our overall risk evaluation is a combination of a characteristics-based

assessment (Table 3), which is subjective, and an indicator-based assessment (Table 4), which is more objective with some quantifiable attributes. Information in Table 4 was acquired from the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook.⁴³ The majority of the information provided is current of as of 2009. For instances in which current data is not available, we indicate the date of the information. The relative risk assessments in Tables 3 and 4 were based on the measures provided in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Characteristic	Risk	Discussion
Perceived Government Corruption	Moderate	Some ethnic groups and sects are not equally represented within existing political structure. Waiting results from next round of provincial elections.
Economic Decline and/or Imbalance	Moderate	Economy is highly dependent on oil production, refining capacity, and export opportunities. Current capacity is semi-stable.
Diverging Ideologies	Low	Majority of Iraqis believe that the government is representing their ideals.
Military Virtuousness (reverence)	Moderate	Iraqi Security Forces are providing security to the populace (i.e. providing a basic need for the people)

Table 3. Iraqi Coup Potential – Characteristics-based Assessment

Indicator	Risk	Discussion
Population Size	Moderate	Approximately 29 million (estimated in July 2009)
Population Growth	Moderate	2.507%: 32nd highest out of 233 nations. 38.8% of population is under 14 years of age.
Urbanization	Moderate	67% of the population live in the cities. 1.7% annual increase since 2005.
Centrality	Moderate	Baghdad is recognized political and economic center of Iraq. However, Iraq is subdivided into 18 provinces each with provincial control measures.
Literacy	Moderate	total population: 74.1%, male: 84.1%, female: 64.2%
Mass-media Availability	Low	52 radio stations, 47 television stations
Economic Level	Moderate	GDP of \$90.3B and ranks 70th in the world
Economic Growth	Low	7.8% growth rate and ranks 24th in the world
Military Participation Ratio	Low	1.95% of manpower available for military duty
Military Size	Low	253,000 as of August 2009
Size of Police Force	Low	25,000 as of 2007
Defense Spending	Low	8.6% of the GDP. US provides additional funding.
Ethnic Composition - Military	Unknown	Ethnic Breakdown: Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Turkoman, Assyrian, or other 5% Religious Breakdown: Muslim 97% (Shia 60%-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), Christian or other 3%
Ethnic Composition - Political	Moderate	Using breakdowns above, Sunni representation within the government is low due to lack of participation in most recent elections.

Table 4. Iraqi Coup Potential – Indicator-based Assessment

Coup Prevention Approaches

The assessments above illustrate a low to moderate risk of an Iraqi coup under the current conditions. However, the risk is actually low based on the presence of coalition forces currently conducting nation-building operations. What is of greater importance with Iraq, or any other country, is to mitigate the risk of a coup (i.e. coup prevention) after the nation-building architects depart. The term “coup-proofing” is another common term used in the literature. To answer those who may question the importance as to why nations should focus on coup prevention approaches, we submit that, unlike post-World War II Germany, we will have to leave the country eventually and have it stand on its own two feet without enduring commitments from the U.S.

One approach to coup prevention is prescribed by James T. Quinlivan, a Senior Operations Research Analyst for the RAND Corporation. According to Quinlivan, “if the essence of a coup is the seizure of the state by a small group within the state apparatus, the essence of coup-proofing is the creation of structures that minimize the possibilities of small groups leveraging the system to such ends.”⁴⁴ Results from Quinlivan’s analysis of coup-proofing cases revealed a shared set of common techniques, including:

- The effective exploitation of family, ethnic, and religious loyalties for coup-critical positions balanced with wider participation and less restrictive loyalty standards for the regime as a whole;
- The creation of an armed force parallel to the regular military;
- The fostering of expertise in the regular military;

- The development of multiple internal security agencies with overlapping jurisdiction that constantly monitor the loyalty of the military and one another with independent paths of communication to critical leaders; and
- The financing of such measures.⁴⁵

Furthermore, it is important that the armed force parallel to the regular military should report to the government leader rather than the defense minister and, therefore, is considered within the balance-of-power calculations.⁴⁶ A few of these techniques may appear somewhat contradictory to values and ideals of western society. In fact, what is most relevant about Quinlivan's article is that it demonstrates how effectively Saddam Hussein used these techniques in coup-proofing the Iraqi Government. Hence, we suggest that this as an unwanted approach to coup prevention and offer the following alternative approach for consideration.

For starters, it is important to take a holistic view of the nation in terms of Clausewitz's Remarkable Trinity. This can be conducted during environmental scanning and further articulated and refined within Campaign Design. The imperative is to achieve a balance between the people and the government, and the military and the government. "Policies that foster institutionalized, multiparty democracy and strong elected civilian control of the military ... must be identified"⁴⁷ in order to mitigate coup potential. The foundation for such policies resides in the creation and formalization of a national constitution. This will require active, and potentially prolonged, participation from the Department of State (DoS) in concert with the host nation leadership (if in a permissive environment) or the newly elected leadership if regime change occurred. The institutionalization of such policies will, more than likely, face moderate

apprehension or outright opposition given that, in most circumstances, the recommended policies represent a significant change in culture. It is not easy to change decades, or even centuries, of strategic culture that existed prior to nation-building efforts. In fact, the pre-existing culture may view corruption, tiered liberty, no rule of law, violence as selected methods to resolve disputes, and diversity of wealth as acceptable behavior.

Our approach to coup prevention is simplified into six components with each occurring simultaneously when feasible. The first component towards balancing the trinity involves **inculcating a sense of values** within the governing bodies (executive, legislative, and judicial). This cannot be done in isolation with the military because the people will see them, the military, as the keepers of values and morals. Subsequently, the military will be seen as the revered institution and one may recall that this reverence is a common coup characteristic. The inculcation of values requires both education and mentorship, which are not easy tasks and will require significant levels of effort from DoS. This component will become impossible if the goal is to make all government officials and institutions virtuous. Even within the United States, the self-proclaimed beacon of democracy, there are governing individuals and institutions that are corrupt and self-serving.

The second component is the necessity to establish a **rule of law** if one does not exist, or modify the existing judicial system, to ensure that governing officials are held accountable. An acceptable rule of law will potentially reduce government corruption. This too begins with a shared commitment to a national constitution (DoS heavy). The structure of the government is less important (e.g. US-like, or monarchy, or somewhere

in between). What is important is the faith that the people and military have in the legal system. Following the removal of Saddam Hussein's government, the coalition has made the establishment of a rule of law in Iraq a top priority. "The Iraqi judiciary processes numerous civil and criminal cases with the goal being effective Rule of Law, in which the Iraqi citizens have trust in the government and can get justice."⁴⁸

The third component is to set the foundations for **economic growth**, which include systems for maintaining economic resiliency. This component goes back to the requirement of meeting people's basic needs. Using a whole-of-government approach, economic growth and security requires assistance from the U.S. departments related to the four common sectors of energy, agriculture, manufacturing, and financing. Since the strength of an economic system is dependent upon the transportation infrastructure, the U.S. Department of Transportation will likewise have an important role. Using Iraq as an example, it is not enough for the coalition to depart Iraq with functioning and secured oil fields. The refining and transportation systems must be modernized to generate future revenue from oil exports. Note that agricultural development within predominantly oil-based economies can serve as a solid strategy for reducing urbanization.

The fourth component is to ensure that the **ethnic and religious composition** of the government and military closely match the ethnic and religious composition of the people. In homogenous societies, this becomes less important. However, in heterogeneous societies where sectarian strife has existed for decades, if not centuries, this component is vital for creating balance within Clausewitz's Trinity.

The fifth component is to **limit the expeditionary capability** of the armed forces, which in turn keeps the military leadership focused on internal security efforts. Germany and Japan serve as great examples. The responsibility for this component may rest initially with DoD, but should transition later to DoS. For example, the military limits placed on Germany and Japan were political constructs created during the termination phase and maintained thru politics and policy afterwards by DoS and other governments. The final component is to **increase the literacy rates** of the population. Governing officials are far less likely to succumb to corruptive ways if the people are knowledgeable.

Conclusion and Recommendations

When conducting nation-building operations, as with any operation involving elements of national power, it is of utmost importance to clearly identify the end-state. If a nation-building operation involves the generation, training, and equipping of armed forces, strategic planners must ensure, as an end-state, that the political structure is enduring. Departing a country with a moderate to high coup risk is unacceptable.

In this paper, we provided a set of common characteristics and coup indicators, which should be used to assess a nation's coup potential. Furthermore, we prescribed one coup prevention approach consisting of six components designed to bring balance to Clausewitz's Trinity. Based on recent events in Africa, there is the potential for extensive nation-building opportunities as state after state fails and become prospective training grounds for Al Qaeda. The single greatest challenge for USAFRICOM is that it must strive to change the culture in Africa. African countries have a long history of successful coups and coup attempts with a majority of the governments following a patronage system.

The optimal application of our coup prevention approach requires a synthesized whole-of-government effort. Therefore, we recommend the development and declaration of a national policy for nation-building operations that involve generating, training, and equipping a nation's security forces. This policy must specify the roles and authorities of the Coordinator for Reconstruction & Stabilization as well as the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) for each Geographic Combatant Command. Furthermore, the policy must explicitly prescribe those Theater Security Cooperation activities necessary for supporting good governance.⁴⁹ Finally, we recommend that congress expand, and make permanent, the funding authorizations in Section 1206 of the NDAA to include funding for those non-DoD agencies that will participate in future nation-building operations.

Endnotes

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